

Howland Wood - Curatorial

Bonner, Campbell, Prof.

1930-1933

[University of Michigan

Dept. of Greek

Ann Arbor, MI]

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR
DEPARTMENT OF GREEK

CAMPBELL BONNER
BENJAMIN DEAN MERITT
JAMES EUGENE DUNLAP
WARREN EVERETT BLAKE

FRANK EGLESTON ROBBINS
(ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT)

2020 Angell Hall
February 13, 1930.

Mr. Howland Wood
American Numismatic Society
Broadway and 156 Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Wood,

I am sending this letter, not to urge you to hurry about the rather large commission which I asked you to undertake with reference to photographing the gnostic gemse in the Osborne and Newell collections, but to see whether you can provide me with ~~two~~ photograph only in a rather short time.

I have agreed to give a paper on Ancient Amulets and Talismans before a meeting here and again in New Orleans, and am rather busy in assembling suitable illustrations. There is one of Mr. Newell's group of gnostic amulets in which I am particularly interested, and which I am sure he would be willing to let me use on this occasion, since he told me two weeks ago that I might make use of any of his stones.

The one which I want is easily recognizable as the largest and in some respects the oddest of his gnostic pieces. It is a fairly large oval, probably as much as four centimetres in the longer dimension, and it seems to be a piece not of stone but of some lighter material such as bone or highly polished wood. It is a dull brown in color as I remember it. The obverse has a stiff, awkward figure of Isis and around the edge runs a legend of magical jargon in Greek letters which goes three times around the ~~outer~~ rim. On the back there is also some writing which happens to interest me particularly. As I remember it the writing on this piece is rather lightly incised, so that it is not certain that a plasticine impression would show up the writing well. Plain photographs of the original (both sides) would probably be better. The writing ought to show fairly well because the ~~cuts~~ show a sort of white or gray against the brown. It may be that it is a little hard to photograph the piece, so possibly a color screen may have to be used to reduce slightly the darkness of the material.

cutting

Mr. Newell will remember the piece, because I expressed great interest in it and told him that it was very unusual. I should like to have the photographs for study as soon as possible, and should be very grateful if you would pick this piece out for early handling and take the others at your convenience.

Since there will ultimately be quite a little bill for photo-

Mr. Howland Wood.

2.

graphing work I might suggest that arrangements for payment will be somewhat facilitated if your statement of charges could be made out to "University of Michigan, Advanced Humanities Fund, Item 8". There is a good deal of red tape to our system of payments, and this suggestion may save a little trouble.

I think with the greatest appreciation of your kindness to me when I visited the Numismatic Museum two weeks ago, and should like for you to express my thanks also to your associates, particularly Mr. Newell. It is very pleasant indeed to find authorities of a museum so generous with their material and so willing to cooperate with investigators.

Sincerely yours,

Campbell Bonner

CB:H

Please excuse the appearance of this letter -
both the stenographer and I made some slips
in haste.

February 15, 1930

Professor Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Dear Sir:

Your letter is at hand and I am preparing the
gems for photographing, and I shall be able to send them
to you in the course of a few days. I will try to see
Mr. Newell to -day to get his pieces.

Yours very truly,

Curator.

Fev. 28, 1930

Professor Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Dear Professor Bonner:

The other day I mailed to you the photographs of the Gnostic Seals. I am sorry about the delay. We have only just gotten our photographing outfit completed and ready for work. It took quite a while.

The first thirteen groups on the larger plate belong to the Osborne collection now in the Numismatic Society. The balance are Mr. Newell's. You will note that on one or two of Mr. Newell's larger pieces I photographed both the actual piece and the impression, and the little glass one I photographed twice so as to get the best results. If you desire the plasticene impressions and will let me know, I will send them to you.

Herewith I am enclosing a bill to cover.

Yours very truly,

Curator.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR
DEPARTMENT OF GREEK

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JAMES EUGENE DUNLAP
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FRANK EGLESTON ROBBINS
(ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT)

2020 Angell Hall
March 3, 1930.

Mr. Howland Wood
The American Numismatic Society
Broadway, bet. 155 and 156 Streets
New York City

Dear Mr. Wood,

The excellent photographs of the Osborne and Newell collections of gnostic stones were received a few days ago, and I am delighted with the results of your work. I have made a requisition to cover the bill which you enclose for them, and hope the payment will reach you without undue delay. There is, however, a fair amount of red tape in connection with these payments, and some days will undoubtedly pass before the check reaches you.

I am interested to know that I may have the ~~plasticene~~ impressions from which you made the photographs. I think that they may be useful in one way or another and I should be very grateful if you would send them to me. I suppose they can be so packed as to make the danger of crushing slight.

There is one small matter about which I should like a little information. I am curious about the material of that very odd amulet in Newell's collection which has on the one side a figure of Isis, or more probably Hecate, with a torch, and a jargon inscription surrounding it in three lines. It seemed to us to be of some material lighter than stone, whether wood or bone we could not tell. It may conceivably be of stone after all. If a competent judge could decide this point, which it may be you know already, I should like to know what the material is within the next few weeks. I expect to refer to the amulet in a lecture, and should like to have its description exact.

*This is the
next to the
largest in
Newell's
group, I think
Color dark
brown.*

With many thanks for your good offices, and kindest regards,
I am

Sincerely yours,

Campbell Bonner.

*B. D. B.
one of
the best
specimens*

March 5, 1930

Professor Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Dear Professor Bonner:

I am having our man pack up the plasticene impressions, and I trust that they will reach you in good condition. You can always make plaster casts from these moulds, and we are not at all concerned about when the payment will reach us.

I overheard Mr. Newell and Mr. Beatty discussing the material from which the amulet is made, and Mr. Beatty ventured the opinion that it is lava; I am inclined to agree with him. If it is not lava, then it is some sort of stone. It is not wood or bone.

Sincerely yours,

Curator.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR
DEPARTMENT OF GREEK

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BENJAMIN DEAN MERITT
JAMES EUGENE DUNLAP
WARREN EVERETT BLAKE

FRANK EGLESTON ROBBINS
(ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT)

2020 Angell Hall
April 28, 1930.

Mr. Howland Wood
American Numismatic Society
Broadway & 156 Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Wood,

I am hoping to be in New York on the eighth and ninth of May, and should like very much at that time to go a little further with the work which I did in the winter. I have made good use of the photographs and impressions which you sent me, and so far as the Osborne gems are concerned I think I have nothing to do but settle one or two trifling details which I overlooked. But in the case of Mr. Newell's stones I wish to make measurements, note materials, and examine some of the designs and inscriptions quite carefully; for even the best photographs do not reveal as much as the original.

I hope that it will be convenient for me to see and work with Mr. Newell's stones at the time I propose. If he is not himself available at that time, I have no doubt that he could leave the stones in your care, and I should be very glad if you would lay this request before him at your earliest convenience.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Campbell Bonner

CB:H

April 30th 1930

Professor Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Dear Professor Bonner:

Your letter of the 28th is at hand and I shall be very glad to see you on May 9th, as it is my plan to be away on the 7th and 8th. I will also be here on the 10th, in case you are in New York then. I spoke to Mr. Newell, and he is laying out, to turn over to me, his collection of gnostic pieces. He has found two or three others that may belong this series. Also, he has taken up with Dr. Kunz of Tiffany, the question of the material of those two larger pieces.

Sincerely yours,

Curator.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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DEPARTMENT OF GREEK

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WARREN EVERETT BLAKE

FRANK EGLESTON ROBBINS
(ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT)

2020 Angell Hall
May 2, 1930.

Mr. Howland Wood
The American Numismatic Society
Broadway and 156 Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Wood,

I have your very kind note of April thirtieth, and am sending this, perhaps a little ungratefully, to ask one further concession. Since I wrote to you it develops that I shall have one other errand to carry out in New York, namely a search for something at the Morgan Library, and my time for that reason is going to be very scant. I shall need a large part of a day in your Museum, and since the ninth of May is already broken by a committee meeting which I must attend in the afternoon, I should greatly prefer to have the eighth with Mr. Newell's stones if possible. Would it be possible for you to lay them out and put them in charge of somebody else, since you have to be away on that day? Since I noticed at my last visit that various people were at work on different sets of objects, I hope that with a little management we might arrange this even in your absence. It is true that I shall miss your assistance on some points, but since a large part of my time will be taken up merely with measuring the stones and deciphering the inscriptions, I might be able to use your knowledge later on, perhaps by correspondence.

This may be asking more than you should concede, considering your responsibility as Curator. But if it can be arranged, I should be very glad if you would send a note for me in care of the Hotel Commodore at the Grand Central Terminal, where I shall call for mail on the morning of May eighth.

With apologies for troubling you again, I am

Sincerely yours,

Campbell Bonner.

CB:H

I shall have all the apparatus necessary - a vernier for measurements, lens, etc. - all of the tenth of May I have to give to the annual meeting of the managing Committee of the American School in Athens.

May 5th 1930

Professor Campbell Bonner
Hotel Commodore
Grand Central Terminal
New York City

Dear Professor Bonner:

It is my plan now to be at the Museum on Thursday the 8th, but not on the 7th. Therefore everything will be all right for you to inspect whatever you want of ours and Mr. Newell's stones. In case I should not be here, I will make arrangements so that you can see them.

But I am looking forward to seeing you.

Very sincerely yours,

Curator.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
ANN ARBOR
DEPARTMENT OF GREEK

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FRANK EGLESTON ROBBINS
(ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT)

2020 Angell Hall
May 19, 1930.

Mr. Howland Wood
American Numismatic Society
Broadway and 156 Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Wood,

I have received the impressions of the stones, and am very much obliged to you for sending them so promptly. Some of the cuttings appear to have been very shallow so that I am not quite sure that I could read from these impressions; but I believe that my notes are satisfactory, so it does not matter. I should like to know in good time what Dr. Kunz thinks about the materials of those stones as to which I was in doubt. I know I can count upon you to give me a report when you have the information.

If there are charges for these last impressions, let me know when the estimate is made, and I will see that a requisition goes through promptly.

Thanking you for your help, I am

Sincerely yours,

Campbell Bonner

May 21, 1930

Professor Campbell Bonner

University of Michigan

Ann Arbor, Mich.

Dear Professor Bonner:

Your letter is just at hand and I realize that some of the letters do not show up very well, but it was the best that could be done from the stone. In the next few days Mr. Newell is taking those six pieces to Dr. Kunz, and I will let you know his findings. Mr. Newell has also brought to life some more gnostic gems - some, I think, are interesting. I am sending you plasticene impressions of these. If you wish, I will ask Mr. Newell if we can send the stones on to you, as I can see it is somewhat difficult for you to read everything from impressions.

Herewith is enclosed a bill for \$7.50 for making the plasticene casts.

Sincerely yours,

Curator.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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FRANK EGLESTON ROBBINS
(ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT)

2020 Angell Hall
May 28, 1930.

Mr. Howland Wood
American Numismatic Society
Broadway between 155 and 156 Sts.
New York City

Dear Mr. Wood,

I have received within the last two or three days the additional group of plasticene impressions of the stones which Mr. Newell turned up after my visit. I am very glad to get them, and as you anticipated, I find it difficult and in fact almost impossible to make out some of the inscriptions and even some of the designs, since the cutting is quite shallow in some of the specimens. I may also suggest that the plasticene used seems to me to have been in this case a little inferior. In trying to make out some of the letters I put the inscriptions under a Leitz magnifier, and saw then that a considerable amount of some impurity, I don't know just what, had got mixed with the plasticene. That may possibly account for the impressions being less clear than usual. However, I am grateful to you for your trouble.

It occurred to me also that Mr. Newell might be willing to send the stones on to me for study here, and since I have to write to him about another matter I think I will just sound him about this. I shall be glad of course to learn what Dr. Kunz thinks of the material of those six which we were in doubt about.

Sincerely yours,

Campbell Bonner

June 3, 1930

Professor Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Dear Professor Bonner;

Your letter of the 28th is at hand, and also the one to Mr. Newell. I had great difficulty in making impressions of two of the stones as the surface came off and left that rough appearance. Mr. Newell is willing to send these stones to you after he sees Dr. Kunz, which I take he has not yet done. With the actual pieces in hand, your troubles should be reduced to a minimum.

Very sincerely yours,

Curator.

March 5, 1931

Professor Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Dear Professor Bonner:

A while ago Mr. Newell handed over to me to photograph some more gnostic gems. I am herewith sending you a print of these and also the plasticene impressions. I think you already have made notes concerning these. I am also enclosing a bill.

Sincerely yours,

Curator.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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FRANK EGLESTON ROBBINS
(ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT)

2020 Angell Hall
October 16, 1931

Mr. Howland Wood
The American Numismatic Society
Broadway and 156th Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Wood:

Since Mr. Newell does not like to write letters, I am going to impose on your good nature and ask you to find out for me what progress has been made with the cleaning of a lot of twenty coins or thereabouts which Mr. Newell took down to New York from here something more than a year ago.

He very kindly offered to have some experiments conducted on these coins by the experts at Columbia who have applied the electric process to some of his own coins. We knew that it would take a long time, but it seems that the extreme limit which was ever contemplated has been passed. If the process has been completed we should like very much to see the results, particularly because we hope to use a similar process here. Of course, if there is any prospect of the condition of the coins being improved by continued treatment there is no need to hurry matters.

I should be very glad to have a word from you about this matter at your convenience. Meanwhile, with kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Campbell Bonner

October 24, 1931.

Prof. Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Dear Prof. Bonner:

Please pardon me for not answering your letter at once. I got into communication with Prof. Campbell and he has had sent up to me the coins that he has had in a bath. He said he would have preferred to keep them a little while longer. They did not turn out over good, there was not enough metal left in them to make a good redcovery. I have been expecting Mr. Newell in and he should be here now any day. I will turn these over to him and you should either hear from Mr. Newell or myself again very shortly.

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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DEPARTMENT OF GREEK

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FRANK EGLESTON ROBBINS
(ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT)

2020 Angell Hall
October 28, 1931

Mr. Howland Wood
The American Numismatic Society
Broadway and 156th Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Wood:

As matters turned out, I am sorry that I troubled you about those coins which Professor Campbell has been treating. I had supposed that the time when any treatment would do them good had long since elapsed, and in fact, I thought it likely that Professor Campbell had brought them back to your museum some time ago. However, since he thinks that something might be accomplished by keeping them a little while longer, I write to say that we do not object in the least to leaving them. I had supposed that they were needed for some of our studies here, but now learn that this is not the case.

So, if any result of scientific value can be obtained by continuing the experiment on these coins longer, Professor Campbell is welcome to keep them, or perhaps I should say, to take them back and continue the treatment. If he cares to do this, I would only suggest that as soon as he is fully satisfied that nothing more can be accomplished, he ~~will~~ return them to you or else send them on directly to me.

Thanking you for your trouble, I am

Sincerely yours,

Campbell Bonner.

October 30, 1931.

Prof. Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Dear Prof. Bonner:

Since my letter to you, I have looked over the coins Prof. Campbell returned and I do not think that a further treatment would help them any. In other words, there was not enough metal left in the pieces for them to reconstruct themselves. One dropped all to pieces and all that was left were a few crumbs. I have handed these over to Mr. Newell, as he was going to attribute them the best he could. You should hear from him any time.

Very truly yours,

HW:JG

Curator

February 15, 1933.

Prof. Campbell Bonner
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Dear Prof. Bonner:

Please pardon the delay in communicating with you concerning the lot of coins we cleaned for you. Mr. Newell has been south virtually ever since you were here. I was able only to speak to him for a few minutes twice on hurried trips back to New York. He could not find them at first and only located them yesterday. I am returning them to you by parcel post insured.

Very truly yours,

HWE:JG

Curator